

Guide to writing an Essay

The Topic:

Ensure you analyse the question and understand clearly what it is asking. Make sure you answer the question when writing your essay. Some key words used in essay questions are stated in the glossary at the end of this document:

Research:

Research the topic and gather more information than you might use. In saying this make sure you use only the relevant facts and information in your essay. Information can be gleaned from many sources, however make sure the research and discussion papers are recently published so you have the most accurate up-to-date information included in your essay.

Writing your essay

There are three parts to an essay; Introduction, Body and Conclusion, these are described below.

The Introduction

This is the beginning of the essay and outlines the argument and explains what is going to be written in the body of the essay. It presents your ideas and introduces the reader into the subject of your essay.

The introduction should contain the following:

- Summarise the issues to show an understanding of the question;
- Look at the issues raised by the question;
- Outline the main issues you intend presenting;
- Present the method of research or experiment;
- Summarise the essay;
- Answer the question set.

Do not use your introduction as a warm-up – make it direct, relevant and impressive so it sets the tone for the rest of the essay. Remembering the Five-W's will help you keep your introduction solid and relevant, they are; **Who**, **What**, **When**, **Where** and **Why**.

The Body

The body of the essay is where you explain, describe or argue the topic question.

The body will be made up of a number of paragraphs. Each body paragraph will have the same basic structure:

- The main idea in sentence form
- Followed by your supporting points for that main idea, leaving up to five lines between each point.
- Elaborate on the point in the five lines you have left under each supporting point. This can be in the form of description, explanation or discussion.

When you have completed each paragraph you continue on to writing the conclusion.

The Conclusion

The conclusion draws the information in your essay together. It is a short relevant paragraph that may include the following:

- gives a clear answer or restatement of the answer to the central question
- summarise the main points in the essay
- repeat key information and arguments, and
- points out what the evidence suggests

It is a vital part of the essay and should be impressive to the reader. Ensure that the conclusion makes a strong statement and answers the question or addresses the topic of the essay.

The Review

After completing your essay make sure that you read and re-read your essay to check that it makes sense, is relevant and logical, and that it is formatted correctly. You should also give some thought to spelling and grammar and make sure it meets with any other instructions given for the essay, such as margins, line spacing, cover sheet etc.

You must also check your referencing at the end of the document.

The Bibliography (List of References)

The role of referencing

Academic writers need to support their arguments with evidence, and readers of academic writing need to evaluate the validity of that evidence. A reference is the bracketed or footnoted piece of information that tells the reader where the supporting evidence used in academic writing comes from. The role of the reference is twofold: firstly, it informs the reader of the source of your ideas so that he or she can distinguish between your words and ideas and those of others; secondly, accurate referencing and lists of references are necessary to allow the reader to evaluate the information and read further into the area.

When to reference

You should use a reference when you have included an idea in your essay or report which is not your own original idea and which is not common knowledge. You must reference the idea whether you have presented the idea in the author's original words, as a quote, or have paraphrased or summarised the author's idea into your own words. You don't need to include a reference when the idea or concept is common knowledge in your discipline.

Annotated Bibliography

Bibliographies must conform to the following conventions. Do not indent the second or subsequent lines (see examples below): If there is no author for an article, the title of paper is cited. The full details appear in your references list with as much detail as available from the article. When an author's work is designated as anonymous, cite in the text the word anonymous followed by a comma and the date.

Type: Author-Date

Print Sources:

Book

Author (last name, first name)
Date of Publication
Title of Book in italics
City of Publication
Publisher

Example:

Griffiths, T. 1996, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

Article in Periodical or Magazine

Author of article
Date of article
Title of article (in quotation marks)
Periodical title (in italics)
Volume/Issue Number
Page range

Example:

Poland, D. 1990. 'Kimberley dreaming', *Habitat Australia*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 16-19

Electronic Sources:

Internet site

Author (if known)

Title of article (in quotation marks)

Title of complete internet site (in italics)

<Full http address> (in angle brackets)

Date site was visited (in brackets)

Example:

Word Central <<http://www.wordcentral.com/>> (7 Jan 2001).

Type: Footnoting

Footnotes are used at the end of each page with reference to the points (marked as numbers) on that page.

Endnotes are used at the end of a topic making reference to the points (marked as numbers) within the text.

Example:

1. P.W. Gledhill, *Camperdown Churchyard, Church Street Newtown: An Appeal for the Restoration and Upkeep of the Historic Cemetery*, Newtown, 1927, p.1.

Useful Websites for essay writing

<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/writing.htm>

<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au>

<http://www.jcu.edu/studying/services/studyskills/essay/criteria.html>

Words commonly used in Essays

Analyse: Break down into main ideas and discuss, examine or interpret the proposition.

Compare: Examine and identify similarities and differences, but concentrate on similarities.

Contrast: Examine differences and explain their relevance.

Compare & Contrast: Examine both similarities and differences.

Criticise: Analyse and evaluate the subject critically, looking for weak points in the proposition. You may need to come to a judgment or conclusion based on your analysis and evaluation.

Define: Describe, explain and set the limits of the proposition.

Describe: Give a precise picture of the characteristics and qualities of the subject.

Discuss: Debate the pros and cons of the issue in the question, paying particular attention to areas of controversy or conflict.

Evaluate: Assess the proposition by looking at the information and expert opinion. Come to your own conclusions based on the evidence that supports the proposition.

Illustrate: Use examples, analogies, and comparisons to explain the proposition.

Interpret: Explain the meaning of the proposition, commenting on its effect and describing its relationship to data. Give examples. Evaluate its validity.

Outline: Describe main ideas, characteristics, information or events

Prove: Support with facts to agree with the proposition.

State: Produce the exact information asked.

Summarize: Give a brief account, concentrating of the conclusions reached from the proposition.

Trace: Describe and analyse the order of events or progress.

List of References for Essay writing Guide

Livingston, Kathy, "Guide to Writing an Essay", *Basic Guide to Essay Writing*, <<http://members.tripod.com/~lklivingston/essay/>>, (22 August 2005).

"Write an Essay", *Write an Essay – know your essay subject*, <<http://www.write-an-essay.com/write-an-essay-subject.html>> (22 August 2005).

"Assessment Criteria", *JCU Study Skills Online – Essay Writing*, <<http://www.jcu.edu.au/studying/services/studyskills/essay/criteria.html>> (29 August 2005).

"Academic Writing: Structures: The role of referencing", *Uni Learning*, <<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au>> (29 August 2005).

“tUNEup University Preparation Course”, *Academic Skills Handy Resources*,
<<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/resources.htm#handouts>> (29 August 2005).

“How to write your Bibliography”, *San Clemente Mayfield*,
<<http://sanclemente.mn.catholic.edu.au/library/bigliography.htm>> (29 August 2005).

Assessment Criteria for Essays

Your total mark for the essay will be determined by assigning marks for various aspects independently. The number of marks assigned to each aspect will be approximately as follows:

Answering the Question:	30%
Writing style (Clarity and organisation)	20%
Analysis of issues	20%
Understanding and interpreting of literature	20%
Bibliography (citing appropriate references)	10%
Total Marks	100%